

SPECIAL AGENCY
OF A LADY.The Linked-in Stories Told by
the Hotel Clerk, Lady Detective,
the Robber, and the Lover.

BY ELIZABETH RAYMOND.

CHAPTER V.

THE LADY DETECTIVE CONTINUES HER
STORY.

The situation would obviously now be taken up by the Police Department, and I should have to stand aside, but I felt it to be my duty, clear and distinct, to secure the person of the adventuress whose share in this crime was so apparent to me. I could see that, whatever else had happened, the crime of murder had flowed out of it; that it had not formed part of the original plot, and that the secret of it was hidden in the logical train of incidents that connect the lesser with the greater offense.

Meanwhile my prisoner sat pale and shivered in her chair.

"Did you say Mr. Crawford was murdered," she gasped at length.

"Here is the dispatch," I replied, handing it to her.

She read it attentively several times over.

"But this is impossible! For what reason could this have been done? There was nothing in the house to steal; at least, nothing of value. Mrs. Wright told me all about the robbery. Her father came to New York to see her. Didn't you know that? Didn't you know that he was straining every nerve and exhausting every resource to give aid to her and her husband, making sacrifices of the utmost kind to give the prompt and needed relief to the Wrights?"

"How do you know this?" I asked, struck with the factor of probability in her words.

"Why, I have just said that Mrs. Wright told me; but as you know so much, I will let you find out that of which you know so little. Go on and make this arrest at your peril."

"It is made," I replied doggedly, "and you must come with me to the Chief of Police."

"Delighted," I will get my gloves."

I walked with her down the hall to room No. 9. She took up her gloves and passed into the inside bedroom; I was wrapped in my own thoughts, and only looked after her to see that it was a dark room. From my abstraction I was aroused by a sharp click of the lock outside and rushing into the chamber I found it empty. A door leading into the hallway was locked outside and the door to the sitting room was also locked. I was trapped; I heard a mocking laugh down the hallway. I hastened to the window; it opened on to a small balcony, and quickly passing out of it I ran to a second window, which looked out from the corridor. It was unlocked, and my delay in following the woman was not more than 30 seconds. Let it be too much. She had passed out of the ladies' entrance, and herself into the only waiting cab and been driven around the corner of Chestnut Street into a throng of vehicles and had disappeared.

I clinched my nails with vexation and thought unspeakable things of my own folly.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. WRIGHT TELLS HIS STORY.

One of the hardest facts of life can overtake a man in the victim of circumstances for which he is in no way responsible. I am one of those men. It is true that I have not lived a life of transcendent virtue, but in the matter of the Crawford robbery and murder I was so far removed from any interest except those of family ties that my troubles because of that awful affair are purely the fruit of circumstances over which I had no control.

And yet when I come to think it all over I see how rarely I was to be being hanged, and that nothing except the efforts of that Miss Barnsworth saved me from going to the gallows in an instant. She is a bright woman, and, though I do not like her profession, had it not been for her I would be a dead man and the mystery of the Crawford crimes had been accepted as solved by the sacrifice of a victim—myself.

When I took my wife around we didn't have much money, and I sat down to make a living at cards and the gaming table. There is no more certain way of getting money than by gambling, if you gamble as a business—not as a speculative enterprise; but I was not on that side of the line. I was in some clubs in Paris where they play for very high stakes and I won largely, but to win much you must also lose frequently, and there are cool heads behind those wagers, and the smartest, coolest and most daring player will meet there his match sooner or later. He only has to wait his coming, and his patience will not be taxed.

Well, it was all shown on my trial what sort of a life I had led; the prosecution wishing to present that I was fitted by experience in all kind of minor evils to pass on with promptness if not alacrity to greater crimes.

When our affairs were at the last line, Margaret Frazier, a Scotch girl of education, but with a mania for gambling, and who had at last been expelled from the Casino at Monte Carlo, joined my family as maid. She had a system, and I believed in it, but I tried it in vain. Then she proposed that we go to America and start there quietly, but in the best available circles, a gambling house, whose profits we should bring back to Monte Carlo and wreck the bank.

It shows how deeply infatuated and blinded I was with gaming when I say I was ready and willing to do this, and we came to New York for that purpose. It was at this time my father-in-law, Mr. Crawford, came to see us. I told him in the presence of my wife and Margaret Frazier, the girl known as the "French maid" in this history, what I intended to do. His honor was unbounded, and he begged and pleaded with me not to do this thing.

"If I secure you honorable and remunerative employment," he urged, "will you forego this last disgrace to yourself and me, this shame to your wife and my daughter?"

At that moment the depth of my condition was shown to me, and I answered, earnestly and repentantly, "Yes."

MR. WRIGHT SECURES AN APPOINTMENT.

It so happened that staying in the hotel was an eminent Government official who had in his gift certain offices of the Government. He was the Godfather of my wife and the intimate friend of her father from his youth. The matter was soon arranged—I was to go to the East as a consulting agent for the military operations in the Philippines, and to start at once. Then occurred the conversation with Mr. Crawford which was overheard by Margaret Frazier.

I remember the old gentleman's words and manner as he drew me into the window alcove: "Arthur, my boy, we sink or swim in this boat together. I must go with you. We will never come back to this country."

I will sell my museum—the gift I had promised to the city. I do not know how to withdraw it. How could I face my old friends. I must sacrifice my self-respect and preserve the treasure. I will put the treasure on the market and let it be understood that I have been robbed. The sale of them must be conducted with secrecy. I have absolutely no other means of raising money to transport us to your field of duty nor to support myself when we arrive there. Your own pay will be needed for your wife and yourself."

I confess I was horrified. I could not understand that he was in his right mind. He saw my feelings in my face.

"No, no, Arthur! Do not mistake me. You know I have promised to leave the whole collection to the city. Well, my boy, to your demands about Amelia and to meet losses in speculations into which I have been betrayed, I have stolen from myself every jewel and rare piece of work and replaced each with a counterfeit. There remains yet, however, a quantity of valuable metals, gold and silver, and these must be worth a few thousand dollars. I covered to be pale or cleverly-worked-up glass imitations did not serve me. The assumption was that there never had been any real ones, and that Mr. Crawford, in coming into possession of the heirlooms had taken on faith their bona-fide quality, that had not been questioned by his family before."

CHARGED WITH MURDER.

Thus the web was woven around me, and as the witnesses for the State ended their testimony I saw the shadow of the gallows looming up in the courtroom and claiming me for a victim. The next day the few witnesses I could secure for my defense were to be heard, and I was led back to my cell feeling certain that before the next night should come I would enter that same cell a convict sentenced to death.

It was with such feelings as these that I paced the narrow limits of my prison, when the door swung open and Jane Barnsworth the Special Agent entered. She was, I noticed, dressed in her usually dashing but rather attractive way, and I remember thinking as she stood there that I was not missing the details of her attire just as Dickens

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